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CONCERNING ABRAHAM LINCOLN

THE present article and those which will follow it are likely enough to be wanting in coherent sequence and in definite point. They are undertaken for the following reason : A few years ago I wrote in haste and under pressure a Life of Abraham Lincoln, which happens to have succeeded beyond any expectations which I could have entertained at the time. It has brought me into correspondence, and often into delightful relations of friendship, with many of Lincoln's countrymen ; it procured me, in the autumn of 1918, the enjoyment of a most interesting travel in America, and the honour of taking part in the Centennial celebrations of Lincoln's own State ; it has received careful and most kind attention from men distinguished in the public life of America and from the American historians whose favourable judgment I should most have desired. It follows inevitably that there is much by way of commentary on my book which I should like some time to say ; I happen to dislike long rambling prefaces to the later edition of books, but it might be useful to other students of my subject, as well as entertaining to myself, that I should set down my observations on this matter somewhere. Hence these articles, of which I fear the first may seem to be more concerned with myself than with the great man with whose name I connect them, and of which the character may best be described by the title once chosen by the Abbé Loisy, ' Autour d'un Petit Livre.'

I must begin with an expression of personal gratitude to more people than I can well set forth singly. I am no less grateful to certain members of the generous fraternity of English men of letters than to certain of my American friends, but what I have to say of the latter may be of more interest to the reader. There is something indescribably charming in the generosity with which Americans welcome—one may almost say America welcomes—any frank and sympathetic English writer on things American. It has a significance, on which I will not for the moment dwell, in regard to the puzzling problem of our international relations,

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but it brings out, too, traits which may, without impertinence, be called characteristically American. A remarkable number of Americans, previously unknown to me, took the pains to write and assure me that I had not fallen into any of the pitfalls of which, as a writer on another country, I had expressed my fear, and then doubled the value of this courtesy by supplying me with painstaking and accurate notes of the minor slips of memory, or of the pen, which I had committed.

One of these friends I may single out, because he is dead. Mr. William Cushing of Cleveland, Ohio, died before I could meet him, as I have since had the happiness of meeting his widow and others of his family, but not before he could establish with me an intimate relation of friendship. As a total stranger he entered into a pleasant correspondence with me, which has left me all but completely equipped, through his scholarly pains, with the means of making the corrections which my book, in a later edition, will need. One other friend I must name. Of the kindly judgments bestowed on my book by reviewers, one more conspicuously than the rest passed the bounds of such praise as I could decently quote about myself. The author of this most gratifying tribute was the historian, Mr. John T. Morse, then a stranger to me, and the author of the one book of similar scope to my own which, to be frank, my book, written thirty years later, may be said to displace. I should find it difficult myself to choose the words which should describe this unusual type of the reviewer's art; but Mr. Morse's article was first brought to my notice by a paragraph in a New York paper under the headline 'Some Sportsman!'

Thus I ought not to affect to ignore in my own case the surprising fact that an Englishman could write a biography of an American hero, which in a little while became a standard book in the public schools of that hero's own State. The fact is the less surprising, but the more interesting, because the like has been done before by Mr. Oliver, Sir George Trevelyan, and (far beyond all others) Lord Bryce. I, in particular, had few special qualifications for this fortunate, but perhaps not difficult, achievement. When Major Basil Williams, the kindest and most skilfully helpful of editors, persuaded me to undertake this volume in a series which he is editing (and in which, I hope, a Life of Lee by Sir Frederick Maurice will appear before long) I retained, with the freshness with which such things ought to be retained, a boyish but uninstructed

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enthusiasm for Lincoln, which, like many of my contemporaries, I had conceived long ago; and I had long ago read Mr. Morse's book aforesaid; but I had made no sort of study of my hero. As to my acquaintance with America, I had nearly thirty years before, in the interval between hearing lectures on Plato and Aristotle and giving such lectures myself, passed several pleasant months in a little market town in the north-west of Iowa, paid a flying visit to California, and passed ten days in Boston; also, more than twenty years before, I had paid another flying visit to Boston and one to New York; but I was in no other way familiar with that vast and rapidly changing country. I wrote my book during the War in the intervals of much work in my own county; I did so because I judged that, if I did it only tolerably well, certain obvious morals for the time would present themselves to all my English readers and perhaps (as I timidly hoped) to one or two Americans. The praise which I will frankly claim for my performance is mainly that which an idle undergraduate might claim for a well-directed piece of cramming for an examination. I could reasonably have hoped to give an English reader a clear and accurate summary of the unquestionable facts. But I felt sure that on controverted matters, my judgments must often be crude, that I must frequently offend American readers when the touch of sympathy was necessary, and what I may call the local colour in my book must generally be painted the wrong shade. It turns out, as I gather, that I have been mysteriously preserved from precisely these apparently inevitable errors.

Such further merit as I can claim in this connexion, I have a reason, beyond vanity, for claiming. Having to dance among eggs I determined to dance boldly. I made two resolves. The first was that in controversial matters I would come down on one side of the fence or the other, except when I believed and said that the truth could not be known. The second was that whenever I felt strongly I would speak candidly, paying no regard at all to anybody's supposed susceptibilities. The first is, as every reader knows, obvious wisdom in any writer. The second, where international sentiments come into the question, does require a word. We are all of us interested nowadays in Anglo-American relations. It is time that we were so. It is likely that the fortunes of the world are bound up with good understanding (in the most general sense) between our two countries. And, though a

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certain kind of fussy propagandism has its dangers in this matter, there are few more vicious affectations than a conceited acquiescence in being misunderstood. Now, in any effort to overcome misunderstandings, candour is the first requisite. Tact is a very valuable by-product of modesty and kindness, but it can hardly exist as a consciously practised virtue. Absolute sincerity of address is a tribute to which human nature everywhere responds, and the American nation mainly consists, I fancy, of uncommonly human men and women.

It has often been asked in America, why, in spite of the fact that some Englishmen jar on some Americans and *vice versa*, can some Englishmen so easily speak acceptably to Americans of America? The question might be turned the other way: Why, we might ask, can Americans, when they choose, almost as easily reverse the process, so that, for example, if an Englishman wants a sympathetic explanation of the politics of his own country in the middle of the eighteenth century, he had better turn to Professor Alvord of the University of Illinois? ¹

In England the answer in general terms is by now hackneyed. America and England stand in that precise relation to each other which, while it seems peculiarly provocative of small jars and misunderstandings, yet, when they are avoided, makes the clearest understanding easy, mutual appreciation and just criticism most helpful to both parties, and the personal friendships between individuals on either side most rich in inspiration and charm. Geographic and economic conditions, the formal structure of the social system, the machinery and customs of politics, differ between the two countries in a perplexing degree; on the surface of things glaring distinctions stand out and have afforded ample material of commonplace to the superficial observers of several generations. All the while, in the ordinary homes of ordinary people, the same stock of ideas, moral, religious, and so forth, has gone on producing very similar types of men and women with just the same interests, standards, and aims. It is these ordinary people, who appear little in the newspapers, and not the largely fictitious or prehistoric English aristocrat, or the much more largely real and extant American plutocrat, who in the main constitute the two nations. Of course it must be admitted that these fundamentally similar common people on

¹ See *The Mississippi Valley in British Politics*, by Clarence Walworth Alvord: The Arthur H. Clark Company, Cleveland, U.S.A.

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either side have their differences of language, conventions, and personal bearing which, when they do not happen to be good fellows, may fill them with ridiculous mutual contempt ; but that is the exception when they really have to work together.

But while this is a familiar reflection to us, it is surprising, indeed a little jarring to us, to find that this essential kinship (not to beg by the use of this term any doubtful question as to the influence of race) is not so well recognized in current American thought. In some of the most delightful expressions of cordial courtesy which I met with abundantly in America, I was conscious of a politely veiled surprise that any Englishman could write with due appreciation of Lincoln. In its simplest form this surprise had of course nothing in it that could annoy. But I met with a refinement of it on the part of a most accomplished writer, beloved in this country as well as in his own, Mr. W. D. Howells, which did cause me a moment's ungrateful irritation. How, asked this most kindly writer in a recent article, could a proper appreciation of Abraham Lincoln have come to exist in the breast of so degraded a being as a British peer ? The explanation of the mystery was apparently to be found in the recent origin of the peerage in question ; longer association with the House of Lords, or descent from some historic personage of distinction, would certainly have deprived me of the capacity of recognizing true greatness in the son of a pioneer.

There was, evidently, something seriously intended in the good-natured and gracefully worded piece of jesting which I am recalling (it concluded with a very grave suggestion that the abolition of the House of Lords was necessary to true friendship between our countries). With that total lack of humour which is understood in America to be the birthright of an Englishman, I am inclined to insist that it showed sad forgetfulness of the principle of the equality of man. I am not, however, recurring to it from any deep-seated sense of injury as a member of the despised class in question. I am alluding to it as a trivial illustration of a fact which we Englishmen do well to recognize. There is in America (along with an unstinted flow of kindly and thoughtful hospitality to individuals of our country) a still vigorous tradition that Englishmen, as such, are likely to be incapable of appreciating native and undecorated human goodness or greatness. The nature of this tradition may perhaps be more closely understood when it is observed that this graceless quality

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of the Englishman is looked for with more assurance in a peer. Perhaps there is a further implication present that some peculiar abundance of native human goodness and greatness in America may render Englishmen antipathetic to America.

In this particular instance of Abraham Lincoln this fanciful American idea as to Englishmen will be apt to seem to us especially wide of the mark. Apart from the indefinable singularity of genius which marks him off from the men of his country as from those of any other, Lincoln attracts us by a blend of qualities which happens to strike us as entirely English, while it strikes Americans as characteristic of their own soil. Many of us have known in our own village some old rustic with the sort of peculiarities which get a man known as a 'character,' whose combination of honesty, shrewdness, dogged self-respect, humility, patience, kindness, would go far towards classing him in our minds as essentially of the same type as Lincoln. And we flatter ourselves, not without reason, that this type of native worth, with or without the touch of genius added, is as sure of esteem among our own people as it can be among any other. An American of great culture and high character, whom for obvious reasons I will not name, once corrected his son for the observation that Walter Scott and Abraham Lincoln were the two most lovable characters whom history has made familiar to us. Walter Scott, said this really eminent father, was that great thing, a gentleman, and in this quality Lincoln was unpardonably lacking. It is hardly possible that such a thing could have been said by an Englishman. It needed a cultured American to say it. Many of the salient traits of Lincoln's character are precisely those which are present to any educated Englishman's mind when using a term which bears for him no reference to worldly position, he speaks of 'a great gentleman.'

Perhaps we ought not to be much annoyed when we realize that many Americans approach us with the expectation of an unpleasant quality in us from which we had hoped that we were conspicuously free—for certainly we do take ourselves to be a simple and good-hearted people. There is ground for thinking that in former generations 'upper-class' Englishmen at any rate were prone to the narrowness and arrogance which other people, not only Americans, attribute to us. I am far from believing that the fault is wholly on our side. I have a theory that a certain quality of boastful offensiveness to strangers was part of

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that tradition which both countries share ; that it has lingered a little longer in the more conservative American nation than among ourselves ; that our historic quarrels and the longer continuance of a certain antagonism on the American side than on our own are due to this fact. To examine this suggestion thoroughly would take me beyond the scope of these articles, and, writing in England, I am much more concerned to emphasize our own share in the fault. The principal things that need be said on this subject may perhaps appear clearly enough, when in the following article I proceed to consider one of the points in my book which has been criticized in the most interesting way—the attitude of England to America during the American Civil War.

CHARWOOD.

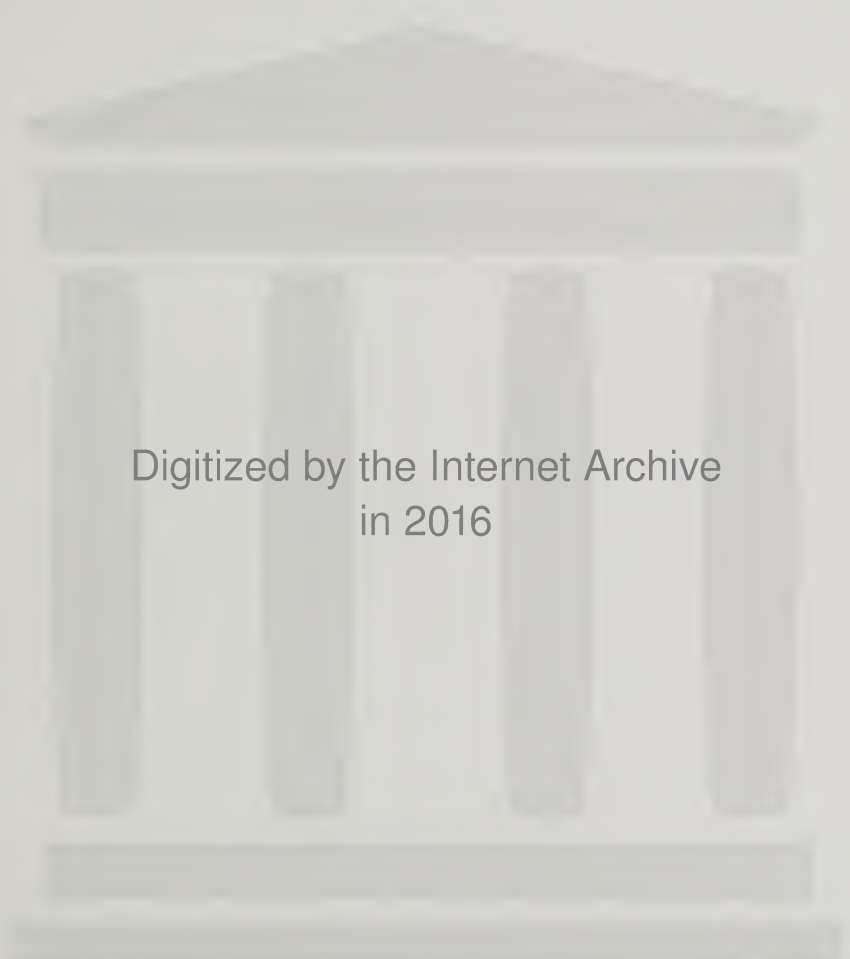
(*To be continued.*)

Nocturne

*Maman, consolez-moi dans l'ombre,
Chantez tout bas à mon chevet ;
Ma joie est morte et je suis sombre :
Je ne possède qu'un regret.*

*Chantez tout bas des vieilles choses ;
Maman, si votre cœur m'entend,
Si vous avez cueilli les roses,
Souvenez-vous de votre enfant.*

FRANCIS REEVES.



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II

THE chief criticism upon my book, which one most competent American critic has made, concerns my interpretation not of his country but of mine. Referring to a passage, in which I expressed shame at things which I called odious in the English attitude to the Civil War, but in which I stated also another side to the matter, of which Englishmen may well be proud, he gently hints that I have not painted our fathers' sins black enough, and he suspects me, I think, of ingenious advocacy in what I said in their favour.

On the other hand one of the greatest Englishmen of our day wrote to me, not long before he died, his special commendation of this particular passage. Lord Cromer was a man of incomparably broad outlook and steady judgment; he was closely associated with America by family interest; he was there during the Civil War and passed some time with Grant's army before Richmond; he was wholeheartedly on the side of the North. He told me of his emphatic agreement with me that Americans of the North were mistaken in thinking that the feelings during the war of London and its press (I may add, than the feelings, too, of the majority in Liverpool, with which town also Americans were acquainted) were the feelings of England as a whole. He evidently thought this point worth dwelling upon. So do I. I admit at once that a very careless sentence in my summary made too light of the long-continued tension which this country's situation as a neutral could hardly fail to involve. I should moreover have dwelt more strongly on the deplorable and insolent levity with which the irrational sections of opinion in this country affronted Northerners in our midst who desired and were entitled to our sympathy. But I am more firmly than ever of opinion that the then living and now living England should not be judged from these prejudiced or excitable people. Its character was just as truly exemplified by the cotton operatives of Lancashire. These men were at the close of 1861 the class

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to whom above all others the Civil War meant actual hunger ; so they tightened their belts over their hungry bellies, and declared that not if they could help it should the cause of the slaves suffer injury for the sake of that cotton trade which meant South Lancashire's daily bread. In point of fact, of course, the silent but dominating mass of quiet Englishmen, more of whom were akin to those working men than to families which could be called aristocratic, cut no such heroic figure. It was puzzled and it was unimaginative, and being puzzled it was somewhat suspicious. But, in its unvocal way it demanded and it got from its Government a policy which was at least honest, and it was never largely swayed by any motive which was not clean and honourable.

Any reader who may wish to study this matter in detail will find a fine chapter dealing with one portion of it in Mr. G. M. Trevelyan's 'Life of John Bright.' He will find the whole story well handled from the English point of view in the late Mr. Herbert Paul's 'History of Modern England,' a book which is, I think, too little known. But, above all, he will find it set out, with painstaking and accurate but luminous wealth of detail, and with a judgment which is generally acute and always human and generous, in a great American book, the 'History of the United States from 1850 to ——' (I hope eventually a very recent year) by Mr. James Ford Rhodes (Macmillan and Co.) The broad facts are well known. Patriotic men in the North, at the crisis of their country's fate, looked to England for sympathy, and got hardly any ; they got on the contrary from a surprising and distressing number of quarters plentiful scolding for all the sins of their past, and galling, if natural, misunderstanding of their every action. This is what really hurt ; but, inevitably almost, there followed repeated and dangerous collisions, arising from our country's situation as a neutral ; and once or twice our Government contemplated a foolish intervention, which continued to be pressed upon them by a noisy section in Parliament right up to the time of the really decisive struggles at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. After the war came the long dispute which ended with the arbitration over the claim of damages for the escape of the *Alabama* and other Southern cruisers from British ship-yards. From the moment that Lord John Russell, who was personally sensitive on this particular matter, left office, there can be little doubt that in this last dispute the balance of

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credit lay with the British Government, though our fullest acknowledgments are due to Grant, to Hamilton Fish still more, and above all to C. F. Adams. Americans cannot now read with pride the once famous speech of Charles Sumner on this subject—though it is an extraordinary fact that he thought it made for conciliation, and Sir Stafford Northcote, then in Washington, was not displeased at it. On the other hand they would probably read the speech of Lord Stanley, the Foreign Secretary under his father Lord Derby, as a worthy utterance of international statesmanship. But we need say little of American extravagances in this dispute; for it was America that had suffered.

I dwell upon these ancient misunderstandings because they played an important part in reviving a certain force of ill-will against this country, which I fancy had previously been dying down, but which, for all the efforts of a great number of representative Americans, is alive to-day. It is for an Englishman to be aware of its existence but not to profess to be able to analyse or to measure it. So I shall say no more of its serious aspect, but I may be allowed to glance at its occasionally amusing features. So late as the year 1896 a gentleman in Boston thought it worth while to expose the real malignity of the English in a little volume reproducing with a running commentary *Punch's* cartoons of Lincoln. In particular he found proof of the poisonous hatred of all Englishmen for America in the fact that *Punch* sometimes portrayed Lincoln as an animal with human features. He may not have known that every prominent English statesman then and since has received the same treatment at the hands of our caricaturists with good nature and often with pleasure. But he must really have known that, while Lincoln lived, highly cultivated and most loyal people in Boston were at least as unappreciative of him as the English.

I have opened up a wide field of controversy, in much of which, of course, proof is impossible. Moreover in some points of detail concerning this country an older American, born as I only a few months before Lincoln died, might well be able to correct me. But I am sure that in treating this subject American writers are prone to a kind of oversight which is not confined to history—an oversight continually and most harmfully occurring in the international relations of year by year and month by month. They attribute altogether too small a part in human affairs to sheer honest misunderstanding.

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In their picture of the events of that time there lurks, I fancy, in the background, the spectre of an England—or rather of a supposed sharply distinct governing class in England—eagerly watching and ever upon the pounce (though why it did not pounce when its time came has never been satisfactorily explained). This governing class—not some empty-headed, talkative individuals in it, but the whole base, aristocratic crowd—desires the downfall of the United States both as a trade-rival and as a republic. In this picture, which I think radically false, they would freely admit that there is some exaggeration—indeed the margin of difference between myself and my critic is perhaps not so large as I suppose. But I am sure that few Americans, looking at the England of that day, or even at the England of this day, escape the influence of certain subtle misconceptions about this country socially and politically; I seem to detect constantly the presence of a certain superstition attaching to the word ‘aristocracy’ and in some degree to the supposed ‘monarchical principle.’ Englishmen are subject to similar confusions about America, but I think they escape from them more easily.

In writing of that time an American is pretty certain to make mistakes as to who or what was representative of England. He will be unaware of a difference, then more marked than now, between London and England. He will inevitably think of the Lord Robert Cecil of 1861 as a great nobleman about to be Prime Minister and not as a brilliant young free lance, honourably maintaining himself by the use of a mordant pen and advancing himself by the use of a most irresponsible tongue. He will not be aware that the then Lord Derby, actually a great nobleman at the time, had far more ties of sympathy with the working men of Lancashire than most great American capitalists have with their working class. He will not seek for a typical representative of the then actual governing class (when in its habitual sober senses) in a plain country gentleman like Sir Stafford Northcote, or notice the conduct of Mr. Disraeli as that of the keenest observer of the public mind. Going back a very few years earlier, he will possibly imagine that the Tory statesman, Sir Robert Peel, who was far the strongest man in England, was a man of patrician lineage. In short, the structure of the strange body politic of this old country is apt to escape his analysis. Still more perhaps will he readily misjudge the motives which appealed to its mind. Gravely and seriously an admirable

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American writer tells us that the English were drawn towards the South by a false belief that Southern gentlemen had aristocratic pedigrees.

Now we here know something of our own elders ; many of them were rather snobbish, more of them were not ; some of them had inherited pedigrees of their own or bought them with their own honestly earned money ; but with none of them can an interest in anybody else's pedigree possibly have had a powerful influence. What is true is that Englishmen were and are (and, I imagine, with reason) often attracted by a certain indefinable quality in Southerners, which has been best described by Frederick Law Olmsted, a certain charm in social intercourse, which we English do not attribute to—ourselves.

There are several points at which this otherwise nebulous question can be brought to the test. And, first, it is undeniable that Northern feeling was naturally enraged by a series of overt acts by our neutral Government, in the light of which Americans have regarded the matter ever since, but in which they are now aware that (apart from mere clumsiness and administrative blunders) our Government was quite right or at least quite innocent. For example, the early recognition of belligerent rights on the part of the Confederacy was a very stinging thing to the North, and it was actually proposed later on by Sumner that huge damages should be claimed from us for it. But it was certainly the duty of our Government in accordance with American legal authorities ; it facilitated greatly our full recognition (against our own interests) of the blockade ; it was welcomed upon consideration by the staunchest friends of the North here, such as W. E. Forster ; and Sumner's idea, that it set on its legs what would otherwise have been an impotent uprising, is now manifestly absurd. The *Trent* affair, again, was most exasperating, but there was room for exasperation on our side and we were in the right. The *Alabama* affair was disastrous—and to certain individual Englishmen disgraceful, but no blame was attributed to the Minister concerned, Lord Russell, except that, which he freely acknowledged in the end, of slowness and meticulous legality, and the incredible fact is true that the harm would never have occurred if a high legal functionary had not chosen a most inconvenient moment for, literally, going mad.

Secondly, since of overt wrong-doing there was none, what about our truly deplorable lack of sympathy for that instinct

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of the North (against letting their brethren go) which was undoubtedly magnificent, and that resolution in an uphill struggle which was as heroic as ever the resistance of the South? Ought our fathers to have known that this was at bottom a crusade against slavery? Lincoln's First Inaugural did not tell us so; Seward actually instructed his Minister abroad to tell Europe the contrary; General McLellan, when he commanded the armies of the North, would have perished rather than suppose himself the leader of so 'un-Christian' an enterprise. Ought our fathers to have known that the North was not engaged in a rash and futile resistance to the inevitable? Certain authorities in the North did tell us so, but they also assured us that the Southern uprising would collapse after a single battle, and they were almost as much in error as we. Ought our fathers to have felt no sympathy at all for the claim of the South to independence or to have been proof against emotional enthusiasm for its gallantry? Could they have been expected on this sufficient occasion—for it was, in calm retrospect, sufficient—to have subdued the traditional, and at that very time most active, impulse of the English mind to take sides with small nations and with insurgents pretty generally? I doubt whether this question would occur to most Americans, because I doubt whether most Americans are even aware that this sentiment is extraordinarily powerful in the British breast.

Thirdly, I am led direct by this observation to the most illustrative test question of all. What manner of person was the chief actor on the English side in this matter, Lord John Russell (Earl Russell, as he was made, during the war), and what were, ascertainably, his real views? To this question I am inclined to suppose that even good historians in America would give, if any, the wildest answer. Lord John Russell was not a very wise man, and he was not a very great man—physically he was a very frail little man much hampered throughout life by his health. He was insurpassable, moreover, in an angular quality the reverse of diplomatic, which he practised not only on Americans but on his own political supporters, on the hapless duchesses whom he had to meet in society, and on the Queen. But for all that he was one of the most steadfast and courageous champions of civil and religious liberty that ever breathed. His name will always be associated with two of that series of measures which have gradually made this country, in its political aspect, more

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effectively democratic than the United States. It is equally connected with the story of European freedom, and especially with the movement for the unity and independence of Italy. He was one of those ministers under whom this people made almost its first use of its reformed institutions by buying out its own slave-owners with its own, then somewhat straitened, cash. The Whig tradition of his family showed itself in him not in aristocratic but emphatically in republican sentiment, and in the intervals between stiff conversations with C. F. Adams, he could not abstain from gratuitously provoking Queen Victoria by insinuations as to her excessive sympathy with the Austrian monarchy. Thus when Secession came about he felt nothing but hatred for 'that accursed institution of slavery,' the 'fatal gift' which as he said America had received at our hands. He believed, however, that the Union was in extremities; his abler chief, Palmerston, was convinced as early as January 1861 that its doom was sealed. And, while he was 'free to confess that if a despotic government fall . . . it gives me satisfaction,' he uttered in language of unmistakable sincerity his sorrow for the 'jeopardy of a great Republic, which has enjoyed for seventy or eighty years institutions under which the people have been free and happy.' Such was the man whom the perversity of fate and of himself has associated in American memory with that unhallowed ship the *Alabama*. Several times during the first half of the war he entertained the foolish idea of mediation; and Palmerston himself had to tell him that this could not be till the North was prepared to welcome it. There can, however, be no doubt that in this he was actuated by no hostility to the North, but at worst by an uncalled for solicitude to stop, if he could, the flow of American blood. For the errors, though unquestionable, which so originated, his countrymen are not going to be ashamed.

Here I will leave the matter. The slight but memorable connexion of Lincoln with this controversy may fitly be left for my next article. Only, Englishmen may observe how a failure of understanding on their part did harm, which an answering failure in America has rendered worse. Something comparable may be taking place to-day. The British Empire in the very act of making further strides in the path of peace, of freedom, and of justice, is to some extent exposed in America to misunderstanding, and exposed to calumny not less unworthy than that which associated the North with Fugitive-Slave Laws and the

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traffic in hippopotamus-hide whips. It would not be well that we should reciprocate with exaggerated, or limited, or mean views of what takes place in the United States; a commonwealth as singular and as complex even as this, to some Americans, unintelligible England, and by no means less full than our own of people whose outlook on the world is generous and lofty.

(To be continued.)

CHARWOOD.

RECORDS AND REVIEWS

A L'ENSEIGNE DU 'BON SEMEUR'

QUELQUES OPINIONS SUR LES RELATIONS FRANCO-BRITANNIQUES

LE problème des relations entre la France et l'Angleterre préoccupe les meilleurs esprits dans les deux pays. C'est à tout instant que le courrier nous apporte de tous les coins de la France et de la Grande Bretagne, et des Dominions aussi, des encouragements à continuer notre œuvre d'union. Dans des lettres particulières, des généraux français, qui se sont illustrés dans la guerre, nous expriment, en des termes d'une netteté et d'une énergie toutes militaires, leur conviction que la France et l'Angleterre sont les garantes de a paix durable. Le maréchal Foch l'a dit publiquement. M. Deschanel est un des plus anciens partisans de l'entente, et nous donnons dans ce numéro les déclarations qu'il fit lors de la célébration de l'Empire Day à Paris. Nous cueillons dans *The Observer* du 8 février les lignes suivantes dans lesquelles M. Millerand s'exprime sur la nécessité de l'union anglo-française :

'I consider that under the present conditions of the world the friendship between France and Great Britain is the only basis on which can be founded universal peace and also a better organisation of the world. This friendship must not only assert itself in European affairs but at all points of the world where France and Great Britain are pursuing their common mission of civilisation.

'I regard it as a paramount duty for both Governments to see that these bonds between the two countries, which have been sanctified by common sacrifices on the battlefields, shall be renewed and strengthened by frank and exhaustive exchanges of views.

'To my mind it is only by keeping this welcome necessity well in view that we shall manage successfully to overcome all the difficulties of the present situation and to pave the way to the new

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CONCERNING
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III

WRITING with many books at hand, but not the three from which I wish to quote, I must break the promise with which my preceding article ended. The few recorded acts and words of Lincoln's which can at all be associated with Anglo-American relations must wait. Only it may be said at once that he had neither that kind of heart nor that kind of brain from which international hatreds and international prejudices spring. It would not have been possible to him to regard any aggregate of human beings, such as a nation, without good will: nor could his intellect have framed any of those generalizations which enable one people to feel superior to another people without understanding them.

Indeed Lincoln's supreme distinction was made up of incapacities of this sort. There is a kind of goodness—now and then amounting to astonishing greatness—which is most easily, though rather delusively described by negatives, because the correct positive terms for it sound either tame or stilted. It consists in being just humanly right in what seem at first very ordinary ways, and continuing equally right under circumstances which make it extraordinarily hard to remain so. Contrasting as they do in so many ways, the two American heroes, Washington and Lincoln, were both marked out by this illustrious form of qualities which at first present the delusive appearance of being ordinary. They pursued a path of very plain wisdom; only they did so when hardly anybody else pursued it and when to do so demanded in reality the greatest steadiness of head, and largeness of heart, and singleness of aim. It may seem for instance, in Lincoln's case, a very commonplace political opinion to have held, that slavery ought not to be further extended in practice or sanctioned in principle, but that the Constitutional rights of the South were to be respected and its inherited sentiments only temperately condemned. But, if we try to realize the changing political conditions and the shifting currents of

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popular feeling amid which his last ten years were passed, we discern that his unshaken maintenance of this balanced principle throughout meant genius and heroism.

This, if I may say so, is the main point of the protracted argument which recurs through a large part of my book. Fuller acquaintance with the literature of the subject and with the views of better judges than myself now furnish me with further illustrations of it, but instead of labouring the matter, I may be allowed to make a bold and summary confession of the phases which my judgment of Lincoln has undergone. Nobody who plunges into the details of his history with a preconception that his was an heroic figure will escape a period, if only a brief period, of disillusionment. That Lincoln was in many respects a very lovable creature remains quite evident, and the loneliness of his situation awakes an increasing sympathy; but he was continually associated with transactions which were in no way dignified, and his apparent mistakes and weaknesses soon begin to seem very numerous and sometimes glaring. But there is far more than that: concerned though he was in a noble cause and a mighty struggle, the qualities, for which one looks, of high enthusiasm, bold insight, and decisive leadership seem to be conspicuously absent just where one expects to find them. A clergyman, who lately settled in Illinois, went there a vague worshipper of Lincoln; what he heard there convinced him very soon that Lincoln was a mere 'ward politician'; and this is quite intelligible, for some of the best of Lincoln's contemporaries saw little more in him than that. Yet it is quite impossible to pursue the study, obtaining at one point after another a comprehensive view of the circumstances in which Lincoln was placed and ascertaining what were the actual alternatives before him, without finding again and again that what seemed his great mistakes were really right; and what still seem his minor mistakes become very trivial matters. It is impossible to go on without discovering further that, where enthusiasm seemed lacking, there was really an uncommon and steadily growing self-devotion to the largest good, and, where leadership was least apparent, there was profound originality and dauntless tenacity of purpose.

At any rate the result of a very candid attempt to scrutinize Lincoln's record without condoning his faults or falsely idealizing his merits was that my estimate of him rose higher and higher

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as I wrote. And the result of later knowledge, which has made me very fully alive to the severest criticisms which can be passed upon him, is to place him still higher in my view. This is not my own experience alone; my instructor and fellow-student, Mr. John T. Morse, has, I gather, gone through precisely the same. Moreover I think it can be safely said that, in the calm judgment of the wisest Americans, the view of Lincoln which many of them inherited, which allowed him few great qualities beyond his unquestionable honesty, has steadily given way to a view which ranks him as one of the great statesmen of the world. This deliberate judgment as to his greatness is not that of scholars only; it is the judgment, as must be noticed later, of great men of affairs who, being scholars as well as men of affairs, have tended consciously or unconsciously to hold him up as a pattern to themselves.

It is a familiar and well-established paradox that genius is apt to have in it something extraordinarily simple, the highest elevation of character to possess a kind of plain and home-spun quality, and the truest poetry to be strangely near to common matter of fact. The explanation of this puzzle, if indeed we could thoroughly explain it, need not detain us here; but, of course, the peculiar charm, which belongs to Lincoln more than to most characters of history, consists in the peculiar force with which the paradox presents itself in his case. If, then, I recur often in these papers to the simple and the common in Lincoln, I shall not be misunderstood as ignoring either the complexity of his character or the force and versatility of his intellect.

I shall first, however, deal frankly with whatever in him was not merely simple but weak, and not merely common but slightly shabby.

Now the minor weaknesses of Lincoln's conduct, to which I am about to refer, all hang on to the fact that he was a 'politician,' in the sense, not necessarily damnable but certainly far from laudatory, which that word now bears in America. He was steeped, since first he began to know either men or books, in the traditions of that political system which was coming into full force while he was a boy, and he accepted it with childlike simplicity as part, for the present, of the natural order in this very imperfect world. Many things that we call jobs seemed to him merely fair play towards the men he had been working with. Add to this that he had an immense fund of good nature, hated

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to disoblige a friend or one whom he respected, and, in things short of first-rate importance, found it hard to say 'No.' Add, further, that his weakness displayed itself most fully when he first found himself saddled with a great administrative task for which no previous experience had trained him—the converse fact that his character steadily grew during his Presidency being perhaps his greatest title to fame. These observations bring me to the act of his official life for which least justification can be found. Generally speaking, the fresh light, which the publication of contemporary memoirs throws from time to time upon any act for which he has been blamed, is apt to be a favourable light; but it is, I think, otherwise with the appointment of Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania as his first Secretary of War. Cameron had the reputation of a tricky and corrupt man, and before Lincoln got rid of him the country had had to pay through the nose for his lax administration of the War Office. Lincoln said to friends, who tried to prevent the appointment, that it was necessary to secure that support from Pennsylvania, without which his administration, which needed all the strength it could gain, would have been weak. This object might have been a sufficient one, but it does not seem that this particular appointment was really necessary for the purpose, and Lincoln's rather pitiful efforts to get Cameron to withdraw his claims show that he was ill at ease on the subject. The truth of the matter appears to be this. David Davis, the sturdy old Illinois judge who did perhaps more than any other man for Lincoln's career, and had charge of his interests at the Republican Convention which chose him as its candidate for the Presidency, had bought Cameron's support in the Convention by the promise of a seat in the Cabinet. The promise had really carried no authority from Lincoln, and, indeed, was contrary to express instructions from him. But Lincoln found it hard to stand up against the pressure of David Davis, to whom he owed so much and who was the man of greatest weight with whom he was familiar at the time. But besides, there was a real perplexity for his conscience, since the goods had been delivered upon the strength of that promise. In the light of Cameron's subsequent achievements it is obvious that the unjust imputation of having cheated Cameron should have seemed a lesser evil than the actual making of a scandalous appointment to Cabinet office. Most Presidents or Prime Ministers, in the like case, but with the larger experience of affairs which such

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men usually bring to bear on their difficulties, would instinctively have felt the danger of placing an unsatisfactory man in the War Department at such a time, and been relatively callous about going back upon Davis or giving Cameron a good grievance. But the difference would have been one of training and not of morals.

However that may be, this is the exact size of the one important transaction for which Lincoln can be gravely blamed ; it is pretty evident that now and again he made some bad appointments to civil offices afterwards, under more or less analogous pressure, or with the same sort of laxity partially redeemed by good nature. But none of these appointments were important ; they may easily be excused in a man sore burdened all the time with weightier cares ; his military appointments, which must be mentioned later, must be criticized or defended on grounds of quite another kind. Here then is a fair sample of Lincoln at his very worst, and let any man with knowledge of his own ways of acting make the worst of it that he can.

Lincoln I have said was a ' politician ' ; he actually liked political combination and manœuvre, and had acquired considerable skill at that game when the issues at stake were such indifferent questions as whether the State capital should be at Springfield or at one of half a dozen other places just as well situated for the purpose and no better. It is a dangerous sort of skill, and attributing it to a man sounds like attributing to him all manner of meanness, though in Lincoln it signified a power of dealing with men in the mass, which grew into large-minded and noble statesmanship. He was also personally ambitious in a peculiar degree. This may not be conspicuous to us from his record but I cannot set aside the testimony which men who had known him long bore to this feature of his character. Ambition again, though certainly a man should possess it, does not sound a very amiable quality. It is only by recognizing fully in Lincoln this neutral, if dangerous, foundation of his character—that he was an ambitious politician—that we can begin to see where he touched upon heights beyond the virtue of most of us.

Again and again he gladly postponed his personal chances to his strict loyalty towards a colleague or to the advantage of the cause for which he was working—in fact, the most salient instances of his skill in the base game of politics are those in which he did this very thing. Things like this are hard for any men to do ; in a thoroughbred politician of great ambition

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they are proof—let us say advisedly—of a moral purity, which the trivial blemishes in his record only throw into higher relief. There is hardly another statesman on record of whom we do not sometimes suspect that the personal motive of rivalry, or vanity, or pique, or rancour governed his course. There is, literally, so far as I can discover, no incident in Lincoln's career in which the presence of these motives has been or can be suggested.

Harder still would it be to demand of any man that in all the embarrassments and provocations of public life his words should be undeviatingly truthful; nor does any public man easily earn such a reputation. Now this is on the whole the most striking thing in the many discussions that come to hand by fair and well-informed contemporaries on disputed points in Lincoln's life. If a statement by Lincoln comes into conflict with a statement of some other man, however honourable in the main, actual falsehood on the part of the other man presents itself as a possible solution of the puzzle, falsehood on Lincoln's part never.

But there is a rarer kind of truth. It is easy not to be a great liar, but it is very hard to be uniformly sincere in public expressions of sentiment. Many years ago now, a very true and brave English statesman, W. E. Forster, visited Springfield, Illinois, for the dedication of the monument on Lincoln's grave. He was a man to whom all the pettier things in political life were supremely odious. Many things were naturally told him, in the free and friendly intercourse which he then enjoyed with many men who knew Lincoln, illustrating—very fully we may be sure—the 'ward politician' in Lincoln. In writing home he notes that they were told him, and brushes them aside as wholly unimportant beside a single anecdote of another kind of which he received first-hand evidence. In the course of the Lincoln-Douglas debates a friend was criticizing some intended utterance of Lincoln's. He agreed entirely with its substance, but pointed out what a good effect might be produced by a slightly greater warmth of expression at one point. His advice was useless. The words as they stood were what Lincoln felt, and he would rather, he said, be defeated than mislead the people '*by a single adjective.*' Nor did he ever do so. Was there ever another public man who even aspired to reach that standard?

(To be continued)

CHARWOOD.

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CONCERNING ABRAHAM LINCOLN

IV

INNUMERABLE reminiscences, each by itself imponderable, have combined since Lincoln's death to create for him a fame, which stands in sharp contrast with the impression formed of him by his contemporaries—save a few who were exceptionally privileged in their knowledge of him or exceptionally gifted with insight. But this fame does not rest on any definite achievement so manifestly due to him that no others claim a share in it. Thus it may be worth while to continue for some pages further, dealing, as fairly as I can, with all the considerations which suggest a doubt whether he was a very great man after all. I have clearly pointed out that there would be literal truth in classifying him as a very ambitious man willingly immersed throughout a great part of his life in the pushing and the plotting of ordinary politics. But I have also pointed out that, just when we do take Lincoln on this not very promising level, and interest ourselves in the precise circumstances of the pushing and plotting, we come upon the shining splendour of his flawless generosity, his unswerving disregard of self at every real call, his utter sincerity of thought and of speech.

This point needs no further elaboration. Very little study is needed to show him as, in these respects, a very great man, perhaps unique in history in the nobility of his clean and healthy ambition. But I may here set down one story which is not widely known, but which, for reasons which I shall not give, I believe to be certainly true. There were occasions, though they were rare, when some very intimate friend might find Lincoln in tears of passionate grief. One of these happened shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg, when he received the news that Lee had withdrawn his army safe back across the Potomac without being attacked by Meade. To the friend who discovered him in his first agony of disappointment, Lincoln explained why he felt about the matter with such intensity of personal feeling. In his anxiety to stir the excellent General Meade to risk an enter-

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prising offensive, he had resorted to a singular step. He had sent Meade an order, signed by himself as Commander-in-Chief, to attack. He had sent with it a short private letter in which he said that no copy existed either of the order or of the letter. The reader may be left to think out the full implication of this.

It is, of course, one thing to be great as Lincoln thus certainly was, and another thing to have actually done great work. I am about to pass to the more difficult question of what exactly he did, but should like to point out the sense in which, though he may not altogether strike us as a characteristic American, Lincoln is a national possession of his people. It has puzzled me that most, if not all, of the American books which I have read about him give no adequate answer to the questions: What did he accomplish? What were the specific services that he rendered to his country in the Civil War or before it? What did he do so well that some other man in his place would not have done better? The baffling situation in which he constantly stood is exposed; the pungent criticisms which his policy provoked from divers quarters is abundantly set forth; and facts which gave colour to those criticisms are revealed. But the criticisms are left unanswered; the tangled course of affairs is related in its bewildering intricacy; the careworn figure of the President is left sitting at the centre and saying 'I claim not to have controlled events but confess plainly that events have controlled me'; and in no book (unless it be the masterly little volume which Major Putnam wrote for his sons) is there a real attempt to explain why this patiently suffering person should be regarded as the hero of it all? We may discover in him the heroic strength and the potent control of events which he himself disclaimed. Why do not his compatriot admirers more clearly point them out? I think that when we notice the prevailing tone of their praise of him, a very good reason for this apparent want of appreciation appears. It may seem paradoxical, when we think of the less pleasing qualities which untravelled Europeans are wont, and perhaps especially at this crisis, to associate with America; but the fact is that thorough and truly patriotic Americans have no wish to put their national heroes in competition with the conquerors and potentates, the 'strong men' and the 'super-men' who occupy the chief places in the history of older peoples. It is relatively uninteresting to them that Lincoln had 'a giant's strength,' as he certainly had; but it

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commands their unstinted veneration that he did not 'use it like a giant.' Their national pride is content to claim Washington and Lincoln as the first great exceptions to the rule that power breeds lust of power (in a third great crisis of their history they have been less fortunate in their leader, and an ambition which appeared self-centred, ungenerous, and vindictive has been followed by a nemesis swift and implacable). The element of gentleness, which accompanied, or indeed constituted, Lincoln's strength has arrested popular attention and has satisfied it. Lincoln could, in fact—so the tradition received from some who were near him tells us—be positively awful when something cruel or meanly treacherous made him, for once in a way, angry. But fame has not fastened on that side of him; it is glory enough for the American strong man that (to speak broadly) 'no one stood in awe of Lincoln.'

But if he was a great and successful ruler of men because he was something bigger and something dearer to simple human minds than that, we need no longer doubt that, judged by more common tests, he ranks very high as a statesman. I say no longer because most searching doubts have often been raised, first as to whether he contributed any great amount of firmness or ability to the conduct of the war, secondly as to whether in the broad issue between slavery and freedom he contributed any exceptional elevation and enlightenment of aim. Both questions are still worth attention, because in truth the wisdom which he displayed in both respects was of a rare and subtle kind. I am here concerned with the first alone.

There is, fortunately, no need to follow Lincoln's war administration in great detail. There is no occasion to claim for him that he made no great mistakes in a business in which, beyond all others except that of life itself, every man makes mistakes, and the test of him is not their rarity, but the way in which he lives them down. Presumably he made many, though it is curiously seldom that we know enough of the circumstances to be quite sure that they were mistakes. The question can, as it happens, be treated on very broad lines. For an imposing mass of criticism seems to concur in an adverse judgment upon him, but will be found on sober consideration to rest on mutually contradictory grounds. We shall find then, that Lincoln's reputation has suffered from a mass of censure which is radically unsound. If we go a little further and take one or two instances

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of the sort of fault imputed to him, we shall find him displaying a firm grip of the essential facts in which no other man on the Northern side, except Grant, seems to compare with him.

One of the ablest and truest of his Illinois contemporaries, Lyman Trumbull, who became Republican Senator for that State when Lincoln first hoped for that office, recorded for his son a character of Lincoln in which the bulk of the keen Republicans in Congress during the war would certainly have agreed. In many points he speaks generously of his eminent lifelong rival: 'He never misled me by word or deed. He was truthful, compassionate and kind.' But he condemns him for 'want of system, hesitancy, and irresolution';—'as President during a civil war he lacked executive ability and that resolution and prompt action essential to bring it to a speedy and successful close';—'a man of more positive character, prompt and systematic action, might have accomplished the same result in half the time and with half the loss of blood and treasure.' Beside this courageous pronouncement we might set the verdict of some military critics who, taking at its full value his patience, loyalty and determination, are obsessed by the thought of his ignorance of war, his tendency at one time to interfere, his appointments of 'political' generals, and his occasional discord with trained commanders. In reality the two destroy each other.

Lincoln's political critics on his own side, like Mr. Trumbull, suffered from an illusion, common in similar cases, that a sufficiently enthusiastic and impulsive partisan could have finished the war 'in half the time,' as it were by one blast of his mouth. This idea, which dominates half the criticism of Lincoln, was, seriously, all folly. The conquest of the South, which alone could achieve their real purpose, was as every military historian clearly sees a stupendous enterprise. The only very good military advice which for a long time Lincoln had at his command was that of the aged Scott. Scott from the first saw the gigantic nature of the task. Lincoln saw it too, though he saw just one thing more, that the fighting spirit of the North could not be held in leash indefinitely. The prompt and decisive action which was to end the war was a mere dream. Unhappily also the prompt and capable commanders, of the calibre of Lee, who were to carry out this action, were also non-existent. Lincoln through half the war was contending with a terrible disadvantage. He had no lack of generals at hand who were energetic, or who

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were professionally competent, or who were honest and patriotic ; but he had none who were all three. The notion which Mr. Trumbull and others entertained, that Lincoln had only to get rid of military pedants and appoint good, rousing, practical men who were sound politically, was found, in sufficient instances, a disastrous mistake. They associated his continued employment of real though mediocre soldiers on a task, which eventually proved hard for great soldiers, with the political caution which made him at the same time nurse the susceptibilities of the Border States. They were wrong there too. There cannot be a doubt now that if he had alienated those States at the outset, he would have lost the war right away. Altogether it would be found that, in a just view of the military situation, the class of criticism from which Lincoln's reputation suffered most, shrivels up.

The purely military criticism does not lend itself so easily to summary treatment, because, of course, it turns on numberless instances of detail, and it is *a priori* certain that, in many of these, the man at the head would be wrong. But it may be gathered up under two heads : the allegation that Lincoln was apt to appoint unqualified commanders for political reasons, and the allegation that for a period he was wont to interfere injudiciously. As to the first, it is not possible to mete out exact justice in the feud which certainly prevailed between the professional soldier, who was not always all that a soldier should be, and the untrained or half-trained volunteer, who was not always a failure. It may be enough to point out that there was a real difficulty in the situation, of which no possible solution would have silenced complaint. There were not enough trained officers to go round, outsiders had to be brought in, and promising men had to be given their chance. The only 'political' reason which prevailed with Lincoln in this matter was a valid political reason, vital to the winning of the War : the North had to be held together and the fighting spirit of its different sections utilized and not damped down. Mr. Trumbull and a hundred other sturdy supporters of the cause, far less fair and placable than he, were pressing all the time that Lincoln should sack every West Pointer and rely on sound patriots, real or pretended, like Banks or Butler, to put things through. Even the rashest of Lincoln's appointments, that of Frémont, was the appointment of a popular leader, with a sort of military reputation, whom it was really perilous—to the cause, not to Lincoln—

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to pass over. On the whole we may safely conclude that in a branch of administration, notoriously difficult at all times, and in his case maddeningly perplexing, he displayed a balanced and a patient judgment. The real source of a certain abiding military displeasure with him may be traced to his unhappy relations with McLellan. The facts as to these relations are now before us in full detail, and they prove at least an almost superhuman patience with a subordinate who for long was really indispensable and throughout was all but impossible.

All this will perhaps be conceded now, and the admitted loyalty and forbearance of Lincoln may be allowed to take their place not merely as amiable qualities but as the virtues of a great administrator. The remaining accusation of undue interference with his generals can readily be brought to an issue. There was a period when Lincoln endeavoured to abstain altogether from any such interference; there was a period when he felt driven to practise it pretty freely; and, finally, a period when he was able to return to his chosen attitude of leaving all to the men whom he trusted. As to the period of interference, there are only two important questions to be asked: Why did Lincoln hamper McLellan in the Peninsula by withholding troops that McLellan wanted there? Why, on the other hand, after the Antietam did he unremittingly but unavailingly spur McLellan to bolder action, and do the same with Meade after Gettysburg? The answer in each case is similar. Lincoln knew, what McLellan wholly ignored, that even a certainty of taking Richmond would not be worth an appreciable risk of losing Washington. Later on, Lincoln knew, what McLellan and Meade could not see, that any fair chance of smashing Lee's army was well worth the risk of any reverse that Lee could then have inflicted on his pursuers. These crucial instances are enough to prove that the interferences complained of were not wanton or unwise, and it would be easy in fact to find other instances which suggest, as these do, that his judgment of the great problems of the War was remarkably sound.

As a war administrator, then, he was at least not liable to the censures which have actually been cast upon him, and while it is certain that few administrators have been subjected to so great a strain, it may be doubted whether many have made so few serious mistakes.

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CONCERNING
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V

THE proposition that a man is a great administrator no more admits of demonstration than the proposition that a thing is beautiful; but in either case one may sometimes see that the critic, whose judgment should be far better than one's own, has not really looked, and, without setting up oneself as a critic, may beg him to do so. This is what I would wish to do to militarist historians who have treated of Lincoln, in so far as they have been governed by the assumptions on which their earliest predecessors criticized him.

In every war or state of disturbance the civil public is apt to do great injustice to the commander on the spot; demanding of him more rapid movement when, given the actual conditions of transport, his movement was really very rapid, or decisions which in fact might have been right but which the only information he could possibly have possessed would not have justified, or judicious and circumspect dealings of which, under the need of instant action, the human organism is not capable. Cruel wrong is thus done in many cases from that of the cautious Admiral Byng to that of the impetuous General Dyer. The corresponding injustice that soldiers are apt to do to the civil minister is neither so cruel in motive nor so harsh in effect, but it arises from an equal disregard of the actual circumstances under which the man had to act. Lincoln has to some extent been criticized as if he had had the advice of a competent General Staff, as if he had had a considerable choice of capable trained officers to use, and means of knowing their capacity, and as if it would have helped him to win the war if he had ignored all political considerations. His critics acknowledge, in a way, that he stood in no such fortunate position, and accordingly visit him only with very gentle blame. Nevertheless few of them have had the courage to brush aside altogether the complaints made of him by the particular soldiers whom at the time he inevitably displeased, and to say that in

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a position of extraordinary difficulty he displayed astonishing strength and wisdom in these matters.

My own impression grows stronger and stronger that Lincoln's military administration was on the whole a very great achievement, but I would rather hope that the subject will be handled later by a more competent critic. I content myself with having put one or two test questions which I could easily multiply, and with the dogmatically brief assertion that the principal criticisms which I have seen passed upon him, in this regard, have without exception been written in ignorance of important facts.

The strength, of which at least many signs will become apparent upon any candid examination of this part of his conduct, is not that of a man with some kind of special faculty for administrative office, or with quick intuition into novel circumstances and into men whom he had not studied; it is the slightly eccentric but none the less effective strength of a man in whom ordinary candour, patience, and desire to do the right thing, however it might appear to others, habitually rose to that level just above our ordinary reach which amounts to heroism and to genius. We have now to ask how these same qualities showed themselves in the still more important field of general policy, and we shall find here, too, that the force of his statesmanship lay in something which eluded hasty observation. A superficial account of his dealings with McLellan suggests at first vacillation and inconsistency, where on closer inquiry we shall, at the lowest, find him a man who on the whole took the wisest course at each new turn in puzzling circumstances and held his hand, when he could not wisely act, not from timidity but from self-command. In the field more peculiarly his own, in which he had to deal with the greater puzzle presented by the blended issues of the Union and of freedom, first appearances are still more deceptive. It is pretty evident that he proved a very serviceable President; he kept the North together; but his services have been attributed to opportunism of a very common kind and the cheap and negative virtue of the sort of man who can never plunge. The qualities which must really be claimed for his statesmanship differ so immensely and yet so subtly from these that it may be well to call to mind at the outset that we are dealing with a man who in any case had something very profound and original about him. Of the author of the speeches and sayings which make Lincoln familiar

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to most of us it is only common sense to expect something very far removed from common politics in the main motive of his policy.

The great question about Lincoln's political career concerns of course his relation to the confused blending of issues presented by the Union and emancipation. Given the facts that slavery was an absolutely poisonous institution, but that it was sanctioned in many of the States by the Constitution which alone held a great and beloved country together, it is easy to see in a general way what a difficult problem confronted any American statesman of the time, how nearly inevitable some inconsistency became to him if he was neither indifferent nor blindly zealous, and what a great temptation there was to the merest opportunism. I shall not attempt to summarize here the account which I have elsewhere tried to give of Lincoln's course throughout this controversy. I may be allowed to confess that the impression which I tried to convey has become to myself more and more convincing; it is that of a high consistency—fully thought-out principles bravely and undeviatingly followed—the nobility of which is redeemed from cold-blooded and austere dispassionateness by many intensely 'human' touches. What follows may or may not illustrate this to the reader.

Perplexities beset Lincoln from the very day in 1854 when, roused from the indifference as to politics into which he had fallen, he came out against the extension of slavery in a notable answer to Douglas. The advocates of immediate Abolition were after him immediately to nail him to their platform by making him speak at a meeting of theirs that night. Counsell'd by his partner Herndon, himself an Abolitionist, he took a 'buggy,' drove off into the country with his little son, and disappeared till all fear of meetings was over. Metaphorically speaking, he had to stay in that buggy eight years; that is, till the time came for him to issue the Proclamation of Emancipation. The reader may perhaps recall that, as that time approached, the doubt as to whether existing circumstances justified the Proclamation constitutionally as an act of martial law, whether it would split the North in two, or re-invigorate it, whether it would prove a dead letter or, on the contrary, bring an immediate accession of black man-power to the North, etc., became exceedingly harassing. Up to a certain point it was all a question of carefully weighing probabilities, which Lincoln with his touch on the

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Border Slave States and on the ardent Emancipators could weigh far better than any other man. His general intention became fixed to issue the Proclamation whenever there was a sufficient success of the Northern arms to give it a send-off. But, unless a very signal victory came, the question what amount of success would suffice must be a matter of the most anxious guess-work. It is evident that for some cause (to which I shall recur) Lincoln's personal desire to strike a direct blow at slavery grew more intense, but the risks which he must not lightly run were very real. His actual decision formed before the battle of the Antietam was to take any victory, however inconsiderable, that might then be won as the appointed moment for Emancipation. As is well known, this decision clothed itself in a strange form. Lincoln, the intense reasoner and often the ready acceptor of advice, had by this time acquired a strong sense, which he somewhere expresses, that convictions formed themselves inarticulately in the back of his mind which he did well to obey, and that he was always wrong when he let himself be persuaded out of them. In this case it is certain that the formation of his conviction was accompanied by fervent prayer, and the deeply religious temper in which his decision was made took for once, in this man who was superstitious like all frontiersmen but usually only in a light sense, a decidedly superstitious form. As he frankly told his Cabinet, after due reading to them from Artemus Ward, he had made a vow to God—a regular covenant, Emancipation in return for a victory—and 'God had decided this question in favour of the Slaves.'

Meanwhile, both before and after his actual decision, he had again and again been forced to answer publicly people who pressed him for or against emancipation as the case might be. He had, of course, to express only the attitude which statesmen find it hardest to express happily, that of simple waiting and doubt. Some of his answers were really fine, others less so, but it is remarkable that he should have escaped giving any actually humbugging answers. I cannot forbear saying that his phrases afford no parallels to 'too proud to fight' or 'neutral even in thought.' Some of these answers of his are famous, but I do not know whether the following legend has been published, and, though not exactly conclusive on my present subject, it may provide occasion for a pause.

It is said that a friendly deputation from the Border State

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of Kentucky waited upon Lincoln to say that they had heard with alarm the rumour that he contemplated some overt attack upon slavery, and to warn him, from their local knowledge, of the disastrous effect which such rash conduct would have upon the loyalty of their State. He listened well, thanked them much for their advice, and promised to ponder it and do nothing precipitately. Then, with a puzzled and melancholy air, he told them how there were other people who gave him advice in a contrary sense. Only the other day, three very distinguished senators, whom he named, had been insisting that he must instantly do something in the direction of Emancipation. Then he suddenly remembered that on that very afternoon, at a certain hour, the said three senators were coming to interview him on this matter. It reminded him of something that happened in one of the little backwoods schools that he had attended as a boy, and there followed the sort of long-drawn, loving description of some familiar scene of his youth which is characteristic of the story-telling American when he is at ease with his audience, and feels that they will be so with him. They used to begin the day in that school by standing up in a row and reading a chapter of the Bible, verse and verse about. There was a little boy standing next Lincoln who could not read well. They read Daniel iii., and by ill luck that little boy got the first of the verses in which the names 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego' occur. His perturbation was extreme, but, pulling himself together with a convulsive effort, he cleared that verse somehow, and all seemed to be well. Looking at him, however, after a moment, Lincoln saw that he was in tears, and whispered 'What are you crying for?' 'Nothing,' said the little boy, 'only I can see those three miserable cusses coming round to me again.'

(To be continued.)

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CONCERNING
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VI

MY last article left Lincoln watching and waiting in sorely tried suspense before he issued the famous Proclamation of Emancipation. Probably his current reputation as a statesman rests on the fact that eventually he issued it at just the right moment. Much of the credit for this fact is indeed due to Seward, whose advice delayed him a little longer when he had once made up his mind to the policy. But it was inevitable that Lincoln, who did do the thing at the right moment, should thenceforth be thought of as the great emancipator. Now here arises the real question as to his rank among statesmen. Having always heard of him as the author of the signal act of emancipation, we are disappointed when we take up any history of the time and discover at once that he was not the originator of the policy which took shape in his great Proclamation, that on the contrary hundreds of people had been vainly pressing such a policy upon him for many months before he yielded, and that the emancipation which some of his generals had been trying to carry out locally had been sternly repressed by him. We can easily convince ourselves that he showed prudence in this; the ultimate result was no doubt fortunate; and the story of his private hesitation and final decision happens to have a peculiar interest and charm. But there is nothing very magnificent in it all. He ought never, it may be said, to have got all this celebrity for freeing the slaves, when he should rather be described as the man who was so slow to free them. And the answer to this is by no means obvious. Mr. Lyman Trumbull has left on record a judgment upon him which seems hard to reject. Trumbull, it may be remembered, was elected Senator for Illinois when Lincoln first aspired to that post. He had been a bold and self-sacrificing champion of the slave all his life; he was one of the valiant handful of Republican Senators who voted against their party when Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, was impeached, and by doing so

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saved America from a lasting disgrace ; long afterwards, at the age of eighty, he was one of the few men of standing to say a word, and a very brave word it was, for the exceedingly unpopular beginnings of a labour movement in American politics. Thus we have to read his privately expressed opinion of Lincoln with respect ; and after bearing, as he does, glowing testimony from his own knowledge to Lincoln's honesty and to his kindness, his verdict upon his statesmanship is this : ' Mr. Lincoln was a follower and not a leader in public affairs. Without attempting to form or create public sentiment, he waited till he saw whither it tended, and then was astute to take advantage of it.' And he quotes another old associate's judgment on Lincoln : ' He was a trimmer, and such a trimmer as the world has never seen.'

It is well to face the fact that fair and competent men did form this opinion of Lincoln, that many people are inclined to it still, and that there is *prima facie* evidence for it, to which one may at first be puzzled to find an answer. There is indeed no alternative to this relatively disparaging view of him (as at the highest a second-class statesman, a shrewd and a conscientious opportunist and nothing more) except the extreme opposite view which ascribes to him an originality, an undeviating consistency, and a philosophic grasp of facts in relation to a deeply thought-out principle, such as few others, if any, of the world's great statesmen have shown.

This latter is my own view. I shall not here deal at any length with the facts which I think make this conclusion irresistible, for I have given a consecutive account of them elsewhere ; but if it is permissible for me to refer once more to my own ' Life of Lincoln ' I do so for the sake of confessing that I think I hardly emphasized enough his claims as what may be called a philosophic statesman. ' Trimmer ' he may have been in the sense in which Halifax proudly called himself such, that of a man who, when most people round him incline dangerously far in one direction, will himself incline in the other. But the notion that he had no deep convictions of his own, and waited with his ear to the ground till he could detect which way popular feeling inclined and then went that way, breaks down entirely when the facts are more closely considered. In the first place this idea of him proceeds from the men who wanted violent measures of emancipation before he did, and, though it sounds a little shocking, it must now be clearly said that he was right and they were wrong ;

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they boldly took the second best course, he refrained from it till he was certain that the best was not possible. In the second place, not only this but every important action of his career after he returned to public life in 1854, every important refusal or delay of action, every attempt in which he failed because he stood alone and died too soon, was quite certainly consistent with principles which he had formed and enunciated with astonishing completeness at a very early stage of the conflict. The evidence for both these statements must now be indicated.

First, then, no one will now contend that the actual process by which America has applied the principles of freedom and equality to the negroes has been at all a beautiful business. Of course it was a good thing to make sure that slavery should cease; it was much better to do it in a bad way than not to do it at all; and when Lincoln did make up his mind to it there was no longer any tolerable alternative open. Nevertheless, to make the negroes free in law and do nothing more for them was a very poor solution of the social problem which they presented, and the social and economic disorganization which Northern intervention produced in the South for many years after the war forms a painful chapter in history. It would certainly have been far better for the black man and the white equally, if emancipation could have been brought about by a more gradual process, with compensation for the dispossessed master and educational provisions for the liberated slave, and if the slave States themselves could have been induced to take the part which their own interests demanded of them in working out the policy. But all this is just what was likely to ensue if the Border slave States adhering to the North and if Congress, which would have had to provide the funds, would have listened to Lincoln's advice and entreaties in the course of 1862. While he was resisting, in a fashion which seemed so cold-blooded, impulsive officers and legislators who would have freed unlawfully a few runaways here and there, he was in fact making his last stand for a slower and less sensational policy of liberation, which, it is evident to-day, must have worked far more beneficently for all. Only he stood alone.

And, if he stood alone in his attitude as a patient reformer, who may easily be set down as cold-blooded while he 'bites his lips and keeps quiet,' as he once said, it must be recalled that he stood all but equally alone among the Northern leaders in

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his comprehension and sympathy for actual individual negroes of flesh and blood ; to the sentimental and in practice unkind theory that the two races were in all points equal he paid no deference ; but a gifted African could discuss very burning questions with him, and for the first time in a white man's presence 'forget that there was any difference in the colour of our skins.'

But, secondly, in this and every other connected matter, it is idle to ascribe any part of Lincoln's conduct to indifferent opportunism if the whole course of his policy to the end was foreshadowed in trenchant declarations of thought-out principle which he uttered from the first. That it was so cannot of course be demonstrated completely without a lengthy and complicated analysis of the situation as it developed and shifted, and an assemblage of select passages from his speeches with which neither the reader nor the writer is to be burdened here, but one may very briefly point out the test which a studious critic would in this case find it easy to apply.

Let us call to mind the professions of liberal doctrine and of aspiration towards human equality with which the American Commonwealth began ; the really considerable degree in which such aspirations had been realised for a very large number of people of European origin in America ; and the fact, very important in this connexion, that in Lincoln's day no other large and prosperous country in the world practised popular government in a comparable degree. Let us call to mind further the way in which slavery, not always presenting itself in a very ugly form, was bound up with the whole way of life of a large part of this community ; the constitutional obligation under which the rest of the community lay of tolerating it for the present ; and all the while the difficulty of tolerating it at all without acquiescing in action which would have extended it and in doctrine which would have justified it. Lastly, let us remember that after all, as Lincoln said, 'if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.' In view of all this, it is hard to imagine a more bewildering conflict of moral emotions than that which arose for patriotic and just-minded Americans when the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise at last made slavery a question upon which practical politicians had definitely to choose their course, and to choose it with the risk in their minds of breaking up their country altogether. Calmly moralizing on the situation afterwards, we see that it raised such questions of principle as the following :

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For how much should a man's country, and the greatness of his country, count to him? On what does the worth of patriotic loyalty depend? What true principles were embodied in the sounding phrases of the American fathers about freedom and equality? What sincerity or good sense was there in the self-contented claim of Americans to have been governed by them? How could such sentiments apply at all to the inferior races of mankind? What part does mere freedom play in the welfare of man? What are the difficulties and the value of popular government, and how far can it be trusted in great emergencies? Is there a sense in which practical statesmen must compromise moral principles? Where is the line to be drawn between needful acquiescence in imperfection and base compliance with wrong? When should the reformer be patient and when should he be zealous? And, in general, is it possible to maintain a faith in right and even in progress when dealing practically with the affairs of this troublesome world? All these questions do present themselves in this connexion, at least, after the event. We should hardly demand of any man that before the event he should have thought out a solution of most if not all of them, sufficient for his own practical guidance, and capable of being cast into words which could enlighten other men as well. Still less should we demand of a man, if in comparative leisure he had brooded long and profitably on such matters, that thereafter in the thick of political strife and at one crisis after another of great affairs committed to him, he should invariably act upon the conclusions to which this pondering had led him,—like Wordsworth's *Happy Warrior*, who

*'Through the heat of conflict keeps the law
In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw.'*

Yet this is exactly what Lincoln did.

Any student of politics who now looks carefully through Lincoln's speeches, mostly delivered in heated controversy on the stump, from 1854 till his Presidency, interpreting them here and there by his few recorded confidential utterances and by those phrases of his later speeches which most evidently bear the stamp of long-settled conviction, can with fair ease construct out of them a practical philosophy of the problem then before Americans, which can be expressed substantially in Lincoln's actual words, and which Lincoln had evidently formed for him-

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self when first he came forward as a leader at all. One may or may not agree with it in every point, but of its profoundly original quality, of its moral dignity, of its intellectual grasp, and of its fulness of suggestion in regard to political and moral problems of all time, there can be no doubt. The wonderful thing, however, is that, having once in this way discovered the general line of Lincoln's political ideas when he started on his great venture, the historian is bound to see, in the whole of his subsequent political decisions on circumstances as they arose, an obedience to these ideas which is all but undeviating, and, where the circumstances were clear, instantaneous.

As I have said, I make no endeavour to demonstrate this here, but I have no hesitation in throwing this out as a challenge to anyone who may more carefully examine the material of Lincoln's biography. The course of this alleged opportunist, astutely detecting and turning to advantage, as his critics suggest, the tendencies of a public sentiment which he did nothing to create, was, we may observe in passing, one which brought him during his Presidency into incessant conflict with the most vocal public opinion. It was, moreover, in exact conformity with principles which can be plainly traced in all his public utterances from the first. There have indeed been few statesmen for whom so high a claim in this respect can be made. If, for instance, we consider our own Chatham, we may find the like generous width of mind and the like power of insight in different directions at once, but we shall no more find the same consistency and patient fulness of thought than we shall find the same patient persistency of effort. Or, if we look at the yet more tragic biography of the second Pitt, between the days when as a lover of progress and of peace he was friendly to the French Revolution, and the days when his main energy was bound to be devoted to war abroad and repression at home, we may impute no fundamental disloyalty, but we can trace no vital congruity. But Lincoln's public conduct throughout is of one piece with itself and with all that he knew of his private thoughts and desires.

I propose in one or two articles more to say a little of the medium of tradition through which our conception of him largely comes to us, and in conclusion to offer some notes as to his reported thoughts and feelings on great subjects which lie outside the political field.

(To be continued.)

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CONCERNING
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

VII

PERHAPS the earliest considered appreciation of Lincoln which appeared in England was the prize Latin oration of the University of Cambridge in 1866. The young prize-winner, now Sir John Sandys, whose destiny since has led him as the University Public Orator to condense into the thought-compelling medium of Latin prose the salient qualities of many eminent persons, picked out on this occasion two scenes in Lincoln's life as specially memorable. He pictured him at twenty, seeing the great world for the first time in charge of a little cargo boat on the Mississippi, and he pictured that unique triumphal entry which shortly preceded his death, when the conqueror wandered, almost unattended, through the streets of what the day before had been the Confederate capital. And it is on just such scenes in Lincoln's history that memory will always dwell. Given his genius and his incomparably lofty character, his early labouring life and the rough, uncultured folk from whom he sprang, appeal to our imagination, and they do so justly, because he took with him to the end the strength which he was able to draw from what might have been sources of weakness, exhibiting when his powers were at their highest that quality, which it seems impossible and perhaps is needless to analyse, the grandeur of simplicity.

Naturally, however, the humble origin of Lincoln has from the first affected people in different ways, and startling instances might be given of men, who had especial reason for cherishing his true fame, but have thought his connection with very common people an uncomfortable fact to be as far as possible softened away. With an equally natural and far more estimable error of judgment, some of Lincoln's friends have been anxious to minimize whatever elements of coarseness or of eccentricity there may have been about him, or, in view of the great healthiness of his mind, the balance of temper and sanity of judgment to which he attained, to make nothing of the dejection and acute

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perturbations of mind through which, upon his own evidence, he passed. On the other hand, there is a kind of sentimentality which attributes a quite unreal abasement to his early surroundings, and there is, of course, a taste which yearns to make the most of whatever in him might in any sense be called vulgar. His early familiarity with poverty, and the little traits of his which seemed incongruous with the general dignity of his mind and bearing, form really two very distinct subjects, but both alike are difficult to treat with good taste and fidelity to life. Mr. William E. Barton, whose full discussion of Lincoln's religion (entitled 'The Soul of Abraham Lincoln') shows in many ways an admirable sureness of touch, remarks of the former subject: 'It is difficult for Lincoln's biographers to strike a balance between adoring idealization of log-cabin life and horrified exaggeration of its squalor.'

I ought here, I think, to say a word of a book which has been unsparingly reprobated, but which falls not far short of that class of writings which, like 'Boswell's Johnson,' make their subject alive and attractive to every reader in later days, by the determination with which they tell whatever facts might seem at first to belittle him. I am referring to the 'Life of Lincoln' by Herndon and Weik, to which I fancy my kind correspondent, Mr. Jesse Weik, devoted a great amount of spade labour, while the general judgment and tone, as well as the personal reminiscences, are attributed to William E. Herndon, the last of Lincoln's several law partners at Springfield. (An earlier and still more vehemently reprehended Life, which an attempt was made to suppress completely, had been written by Lamon, a former Illinois lawyer who served under Lincoln in Washington as a high police officer. I confess ignorance of it, but understand that Lamon had no valuable materials except what had been communicated to him by Herndon.) This is not the only helpful advice that I owed to the late Walter Hines Page and Mrs. Page when I was beginning to study Lincoln, but I would particularly like to say that Herndon's book was commended to me by that distinguished man—himself not unlike Lincoln in a wisdom, fortitude, and utter kindness which was partly veiled and wholly endeared by exterior traits such as might have seemed ridiculous but that nobody could dream of laughing at him.

When Herndon was taken into partnership, as a much younger

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man, by Lincoln, he must certainly have combined considerable high enthusiasms of humanity with the promise of considerable power. He had broken with some courage from the traditions of his family to proclaim himself an Abolitionist ; and, while he continued ardently in favour of an extreme policy against slavery, which Lincoln's judgment (now seen to have been wiser) refused, it is greatly to his credit that, without understanding Lincoln's attitude, he respected it absolutely, and devoted some acuteness and resourcefulness to advancing his career. He was, besides, a keen, though probably not very sound student of varied literature (poetry, philosophy, and so forth), such as came his way, and would have classed himself as, on most subjects of thought, from theology downwards, one of the enlightened. Lincoln would borrow his books, reject some after one glance, and tear out the heart of others ; and of literary and intellectual talk in that office, as Mr. Rankine, once a clerk in it, describes it, there was certainly no lack. How much in one way and another Lincoln owed to Herndon it would be idle now to inquire ; quite possibly it was as much as Herndon would have had us believe. But he does not bring to our notice just what he himself owed to Lincoln, who had hard work to keep on the rails an amiable but rickety young man, and whose contrivance and none too abundant cash were apt to be drawn upon to get him out of serious scrapes. For (not to mention that Mrs. Lincoln hated Herndon, and he her) Herndon was what men of the graver New-England race in Illinois would probably have called 'a Southern sport' ; his convivial habits ultimately reached those lengths which suggest to us why Western towns like Springfield 'went dry' ; and by the time he put forth his great book he had added to them indulgence in opium. It is quite kind, as I conceive, to say this, for the book is more likely to be duly appreciated when this light has been thrown on the unsteady judgment of its very active-minded author, and besides a baser charge has been freely urged against Herndon. It is the fact, I believe, that Herndon expected and even applied for some great office, such as an Ambassadorship, at Lincoln's hands ; and of course Lincoln, with the knowledge which he had, could not possibly offer him any post that was adequate to his self-esteem. So his book has sometimes been dismissed with contempt as that of a 'disappointed office-seeker,' destitute of veracity and animated by sheer spite.

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There is no shadow of reason, so far as I can learn, for impugning his veracity or even his general correctness in matters of fact. As to the main motive with which he wrote, no intelligent reader can mistake it. With flashes of insight alike into Lincoln's strength and his weaknesses, he nevertheless admired Lincoln to the verge of idolatry ; believed in his growing genius as few other men ever did. But he believed, and believed quite rightly, that the most unvarnished presentment of any and every incident of his life or trait of his character was the greatest service that could be done to his just fame. There is no doubt sufficient foundation for the view of Herndon as primarily a disappointed office-seeker to make it unfair as well as untrue. He accounted for the scant recognition which Lincoln as President could bestow on him, by the theory that he was somewhat lacking in warmth of personal affection and this made him in effect neglectful, which he was not, of his old Illinois friends. This was very natural, and to be aware of Herndon's bias is to get rid of the one thing seriously derogatory to Lincoln which can be found in the book, namely, the impression which it conveys of a certain streak of cold-heartedness in his benevolence. And in a curious manner, to which I shall return, he was led and has led others to overlook the width and vigour of Lincoln's intellectual range. But he accomplished the service which, in spite of the pique and the plentiful self-conceit that repeatedly got the better of him, he had with loyalty in the main undertaken to his friend's memory.

There is a pretentious and ridiculous saying that no man is a hero to his valet. A man must be singularly unfortunate in experience of domestic servants not to know that, taken literally, the saying is absolutely untrue ; but it is of course the expression of an evil spirit which has persistently suggested how poorly we should think of the best and greatest if only we could see behind the scenes, and watch their unguarded hours. Now it happens that one or two historic figures have found biographers who could enable us to see them thus, and they are just the figures which have won the fullest affection and regard. Johnson and the great Boswell furnish the classic and sufficient example. Herndon was not great like Boswell ; he had neither the single-mindedness of Boswell's affection, nor the delicate sureness of his moral judgment ; but he was a warm-hearted and keen-witted man. Accordingly, though he composed

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no very complete literary portrait of his hero, he gave the seemingly inconsistent fragments which a sympathetic reader can piece into some sort of living semblance of the real man ; he could not well interpret the mystery, but he could make the reader aware of its presence. And, on the coldest estimate of what we owe to him, this at least must be confessed : whatever were the flaws or weaknesses in Lincoln's private character, whatever there may have been that detracted from its dignity and its purity, we may be pretty sure that we know the worst of it. The worst, in itself, comes to ludicrously little ; and the man is a greater and better man to us for our knowledge of it. The observation which has often been made, that Herndon's book would have been a valuable one if only he had had the discretion to omit some slightly displeasing details, is one against which I cannot refrain from entering a most earnest protest. Before saying what little more I have to say, on the twofold subject with which I began this article, I have thought it right to make this rough attempt at justice to one who in the main was a true friend to Lincoln during his life and to his memory afterwards. Of Lincoln's true friendship to such a man as I have described, few details are to be known, but the broad fact of it, when once noticed, is enough to throw a new and a pleasant light on Lincoln's own character.

C H A R N W O O D.

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CONCERNING
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VIII

THESE desultory papers should soon have an end. But, having started in the last to speak of what may be called the origins of Lincoln, I learned before I had finished it that a book of importance in this connection is to appear this month, and, since the subject involves at least one acute though not momentous controversy, I shall wait for that book. Meanwhile I will take opportunity of reproducing with a few prefatory words a passage concerning Lincoln's attitude to religion which is to be found in my friend Mr. Henry B. Rankin's 'Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln' (G. P. Putnam's Sons). To me at any rate it is moving and inspiring, and I have Mr. Rankin's kind permission to give any further publicity to it that I can.

Mr. Rankin himself as a young man studied law in the office of Lincoln and Herndon just before Lincoln's Presidency. His vaguer boyish recollections of Lincoln go back to 1846, and his mother knew well not only Lincoln but his first love Ann Rutledge, and many other personages who figure in his early story. As for the pleasant and unpretending volume in which Mr. Rankin has lately set down his memories, it has a charm for those for whom Springfield, Illinois, and its inhabitants, and the elders among them, and their reminiscences of their own elders have such happy associations as they have for me. Beyond this, a careful student desirous to know precisely what discount he should take off Herndon's account of Lincoln could hardly do better than turn to this book. For that in fact, notwithstanding that the author loyally magnifies his old instructor Herndon to some extent, is the admitted purpose of his writing.

With a fiery Quixotism, unquenched by advanced age, he takes up the cudgels for Mrs. Lincoln, the guardian of Lincoln's health and the assiduous prodder of that ambition of his which, in its self-regarding aspect, probably needed more stimulus

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than Herndon could suggest. In general he is apprehensive that the abundance of trivial and more or less grotesque matter published about Lincoln, though intelligible to those who knew him, may mislead others and serve to obscure 'the clean, plain, simple-mannered man that he always was.' Really, though Mr. Rankin applies the right corrective well, a corrective is not greatly needed. In one point I think he judges amiss. He is indignant at the report that at a time before he knew Lincoln well, he had suffered such grave mental perturbation as made some friends fear for his wits. Now the evidence of the intense and abnormal depression through which Lincoln passed, more particularly at the time when he broke off his engagement with Mrs. Lincoln, is to be found in his own letters. And this detracts in no way from the truth, on which Mr. Rankin recurrently insists and which forms the very core of his personal recollection of him, the splendid sanity, normality, and steady balance of Lincoln. Men who attain in later life to this full true healthiness of mind have often passed through deep waters to get there. And Lincoln did pass through deep waters.

In a far more important point Mr. Rankin, though not in so many words, contradicts, and I think with reason, the view of Herndon and not a few others that Lincoln's extremely practical and, where logic serves, logical intellect went along with some degree of exceptional insensitiveness on what may roughly be called the poetic side and perhaps on the side of the affections. For any appreciative reader of Lincoln, or anyone who notes the leading traits of his life, such a view ought to need little refutation, but certainly it was a man sane and normal in the all-roundness (so far as circumstances permit that to any man) of his intellect and of his capacity of being interested, that Mr. Rankin depicts as taking his part in the literary studies of that singular law office at Springfield. That he had his vigorous individual likes and dislikes, with a power of quickly discarding or selecting, that he took against certain slightly eccentric great writers, notably Emerson and Carlyle, that, on the other hand, he loved one or two poems which are not of the first rank for some personal association or their congruity with his own deep sense of pathos, all this has sometimes been cited to show that this wholesomely complex and peculiarly mellow man of genius must have been dry and unimaginative because he was humorous, practical, and reserved. Mr. Rankin's loving sketch of him,

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as his own kindly and alert mind recalls him, leaves no room for this shallow opinion.

This shallow opinion never took an absurder form than in the suggestion that he became either indifferent or without faith religiously because he parted firmly from the theology and the church-affiliation of his young days, or that because in ordinary intercourse he was silent about his deeper thoughts, the piety of some of his recorded private talks on special and affecting occasions was an invention of those he had talked to, and the prophetic emotion of some of his public utterances the mere expression of official decorum. This strange view had for long its champions, Herndon amongst them, and perhaps has some still. For a true history, though in broad outline, of Lincoln's religious attitude more materials do exist than in the case of most men. As Dr. Barton has pieced it out in 'The Soul of Abraham Lincoln,' it is instructive enough, though there is nothing abnormal in the kind of fluctuation and variation with varying moods through which he passed, or unusual in the manifest deepening of his thought and feeling, as age and real sorrows and heavy responsibilities came. Here, however, the record which I am about to quote shall stand by itself, with one further prefatory word as to its historical worth.

Mr. Rankin tells us that in 1846, when Lincoln was a candidate for Congress, and a report had been put about that he was an 'infidel' (for which, by the way, the reverend gentleman who was his opponent made ample amends long after), he was present as a child when his own mother asked Lincoln as to the truth of the matter. Of Lincoln's manner and pose as he stood facing those in the room in silence for a few moments, and of his slow, impressive emphasis when he spoke, Mr. Rankin retains a clear recollection, but naturally remembers nothing of the words. More than forty years later his mother dictated to him, as she remembered it, the substance of what Lincoln said. At first sight her report so long after might seem worthless, in spite of her son's assurance of her remarkably tenacious verbal memory. Moreover the fact that in important points a reported conversation of Lincoln's years later expressed the like opinions, cuts both ways. But it is perfectly certain that the old lady would, during the intervening years, have gone over that conversation to herself again and again and repeated it to many an intimate. Most people familiar with Lincoln's turn of speech and thought will see here very little sign of invention conscious or uncon-

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scious, and will share Mr. Rankin's conviction that a large part of the recorded conversation is unmistakable Lincoln.

'Mrs. Rankin, you have asked me a question opening up a subject that is being thrust into this Congressional campaign and which I have resolved to ignore. It is one having no proper place, or call for an answer by me, in the political present or future before us. I will not discuss the character and religion of Jesus Christ on the stump! That is no place for it, though my opponent, a minister of His gospel, thinks it is. But in this private circle of friends, with the inquiry coming from you, Mrs. Rankin, who have known me as long as any of my Salem friends, and in some respects more intimately than any of them, I will frankly answer your question. I do not wish what I may say here now to be quoted in this Congressional canvass to any one, and I am sure that I can depend that every one of you will respect my wishes. [This they did.]

'At the time you refer to [continued Mr. Lincoln], I was having serious questionings about some portions of my former implicit faith in the Bible. The influences that drew me into such doubts were strong ones,—men having the widest culture and strongest minds of any I had known up to that time. In the midst of those shadows and questionings, before I could see my way clear to decide on them, there came into my life sad events and a loss that you were close to, and you knew a great deal about how hard they were for me, for you were, at the time, a mutual friend. Those days of trouble found me tossed amidst a sea of questionings. They piled big upon me, experiences that brought with them great strains upon my emotional and mental life. Through all I groped my way until I found a stronger and higher grasp of thought, one that reached beyond this life with a clearness and satisfaction I had never known before. The Scriptures unfolded before me with a deeper and more logical appeal, through these new experiences, than anything else I could find to turn to, or ever before had found in them.

'I do not claim that all my doubts were removed then, or since that time have been swept away. They

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are not. Probably it is to be my lot to go on in a twilight, feeling and reasoning my way through life, as questioning, doubting Thomas did. But in my poor, maimed, withered way, I bear with me as I go on, a seeking spirit of desire for a faith that was with him of the olden time, who, in his need, as I in mine, exclaimed: "Help thou my unbelief."

'I do not see [he went on to say, after leaving his position on the hearth and resuming his former seat], I do not see that I am more astray—though perhaps in a different direction—than many others whose points of view differ widely from each other in the sectarian denominations. They all claim to be Christian, and interpret their several creeds as infallible ones. Yet they differ and discuss these questionable subjects without settling them with any mutual satisfaction among themselves.

'I doubt the possibility, or propriety, of settling the religion of Jesus Christ in the models of man-made creeds and dogmas. It was a spirit in the life that He laid stress on and taught, if I read aright. I know I see it to be so with me.

'The fundamental truths reported in the four gospels as from the lips of Jesus Christ, and that I first heard from the lips of my mother, are settled and fixed moral precepts with me. I have concluded to dismiss from my mind the debatable wrangles that once perplexed me with distractions that stirred up, but never absolutely settled anything. I have tossed them aside with the doubtful differences which divide denominations—sweeping them all out of my mind among the non-essentials. I have ceased to follow such discussions or be interested in them.

'I cannot without mental reservations assent to long and complicated creeds and catechisms. If the Church would ask simply for assent to the Saviour's statement of the substance of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself,"—that Church would I gladly unite with.'

C H A R N W O O D.

